

1-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Rando, Gaetano, Images of Sicily and Australia in the Narratives of Venero Armano and Antonio Casella 2008, 155-161.
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers/869>



Images of Sicily and Australia in the Narratives of Venero Armanno and Antonio Casella¹

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ITALIAN AUSTRALIAN "MIGRATION" LITERATURE HAS DISPLAYED a tendency to present themes and characters closely linked to southern Italy, in particular Sicily and Calabria, a phenomenon in part explained by the massive emigration from these regions between the late 1800s and the early 1970s. Sicilian Australians constitute the largest Italian regional group present in the country, with some 50,000 Sicilian born, while, according to community estimates, as many as 200,000 Australian born may have some claim to Sicilian ancestry. They have distinguished themselves in Australia mainly in the economic sector as workers, and through the many small businesses, and the very few large ones, established by first-generation Sicilians. Many of the second generation have experienced upward socioeconomic mobility by entering the professions, and a few have made their mark in other fields, including artistic and literary endeavor. In the present state of research there are about 8 first generation and 5 second generation identifiable Sicilian Australian writers, who between the 1930s and 2004 have produced some 39 volumes, while many others have published in various anthologies (Abiuso et al.; Rando, *Italo-Australian*). The most notable literary figure is Venero Armanno (second generation), while playwright Nino Randazzo and novelist Antonio Casella can be considered as prominent representatives of the first generation.² This paper proposes to explore themes related to Sicily and Australia articulated in the narrative of Armanno and Casella.

Venero Armanno was born in Brisbane in 1959 of Sicilian parents from Piedimonte Etneo, a small town at the feet of Mt. Etna. He has authored a collection of short stories and eight novels, three of which (*Strange*, *Firehead*, and *Volcano*) have been published internationally. His latest novels, *Candle Life* and *The Dirty Beat*, do not present Sicilian Australian themes. The protagonist of *Candle Life* is a young Australian writer living a very alternative underworld life in Paris while *Dirty Beat*, set in Brisbane, presents the off-beat memories of a recently deceased fifty-something rock band drummer (although the novel does have a few peripheral Italian Australian characters). In common with Armanno's Sicilian novels they are, however, based on the concept of the "other" and the alternative.

Mt. Etna, the city of Brisbane, Sicilian Australian and Sicilian characters, and Sicilian dialect expressions³ constitute significant features in four of Armanno's novels. The protagonist of *The Lonely Hunter* (set in Sydney), and *Romeo of the Underworld* (set in Brisbane), second-generation Sicilian Australian Romeo Costanzo, is a somewhat romantic and off-beat individual, who, despite sporadic literary aspirations and a liking for opera, earns his living as a gardener, thus following the transported traditions of his *contadino* (peasant) ancestors. *Firehead* is a 400-page suburban love story set in Brisbane's Sicilian community (New Farm, 1975). *The Volcano*, set partly on the slopes of Mt. Etna and partly in Brisbane, features first-generation *contadino* turned general factotum Emilio Aquila and second-generation Mary Aquila as its protagonists.

In these novels, Sicily is not a place responding to the Italian cultural icons commonly perceived by non-Italians such as Lavazza coffee, soccer, and Versace clothing (Armanno, "Under"). In one sense, it is very much the traditional *contadino* society of the rural south, with its old culture, traditions, and ancient wisdom.⁴ For the *contadini* from the slopes of Etna who have migrated to Australia, Sicily takes on a function of mystical superimposition through the myths, magic, and legends associated with the volcano (the most explosive in Europe), considered since classical times to be the portal to the underworld. Likewise, Armanno's Australia—in particular, Brisbane—does not correspond to commonly perceived "anglo" concepts. It is very much the Australia of the "other," the "invisible," the alternative, the subaltern. Brisbane is a mythical capital linked to Sicily, generically by its hot climate and, specifically though not altogether unambiguously, by the Cloudland Ballroom, seen as a mirror image of Mt. Etna:

these nervous migrants came from a landscape that was dominated by their volcano and came to a new country and city that was dominated *instead* by a dance hall ballroom . . . Every time they looked at the Brisbane sky they were reminded of what a different world they were in. ("Under" 23)

We came here and we saw Cloudland and we felt like we were home again. So we wrote to our friends and our relatives and they came . . . too. (Romeo 128)

Brisbane is also a city of nightclubs and vice, of the Sicilian community with its food, its restaurants, its own sense of justice, its own social and behavioral norms, which present a blend of new and old traditional practices.

Sicily and the migrant experience have had a pivotal effect on Armano's writing. His initial inspiration came from the stories that his parents, their relatives and their friends would tell whenever they gathered together:

My family, their friends and relatives . . . had to kind of redefine themselves all the time . . . They'd achieved their dream, they'd come to the land of opportunity, but of course they missed their past . . . And I found that kind of longing and regret and sort of sadness, mixed with incredible joy, poignant. ("Writers")

The present, the recollection of the past, and the mapping of past on present are significant constituent elements of Armano's Australian Sicilian novels and constitute vital existential issues for their protagonists.

The Volcano tells the story of an already aged Emilio Aquila, born and bred on the slopes of Mt. Etna, who as a young man migrated to Brisbane to escape the increasingly serious attempts at *vendetta* instigated by his enemies arising from his marriage to Desideria very much against the wishes of her family (in real life occasionally given as a prime reason by Sicilians who have emigrated here!). Over the years, Emilio has become a sort of powerful, shadowy personality in Brisbane's Italian community, but never manages to make his fortune nor to establish a lasting personal relationship. When Emilio falls ill and realizes that he is approaching the final stages of his life, time and space begin to merge: "When he drew the curtains back he tried not to flinch from the full brightness of the morning light, and saw instead a film of crimson on the horizon, not so much from the sun as from Mt. Etna [. . . but] He wasn't there, he was here, perspiring in the cottage's cluttered bedroom" (41–42). He decides to return to Sicily and undertakes the journey with the help of Mary Aquila, granddaughter of parents (not related to Emilio) from the same area, who has been looking after him in his illness. Once Emilio is back in his native region he disappears on the slopes of Mt. Etna, both a homecoming, a re-joining with old friends, the closing of a cycle, and the achievement of a final resolution to Emilio's life dilemmas.

The Volcano, which presents some interesting parallels with Stanislaw Niewo's novella "Dreamtime," has been described as "an elaborate and effortless mix of soul searching and mythology, reaching from Sicily to Brisbane" (Armano, "Interview"), presenting a complexity of imagery, style, and characters. Emilio Aquila emerges as a character with an irresolvable existentialist angst, but with ever-recurring hopes and dreams, who has his own sense of law, justice, order, reward, and punishment. These attributes are firmly embedded in traditional Sicilian values and relate back to the

origins of the mafia system where a weak and at times non-existent state left individuals to rely on their own devices with family and/or friendship networks as the only means of social support. They are also not entirely out of place, both in the context of an Australian colonial tradition, as well as in the Brisbane environment of the Bjelke-Peterson years, where corruption in high places and the suppression of democracy (the surreptitious demolition of the Cloudland Ballroom becomes emblematic in this context) create a moral vacuum that either corrupts or leads individuals to find their own solutions.

Romeo Costanzo also emerges as a complex character engaged in the ongoing quest of trying to make sense of "the dark romance of this world" (Armano, *Lonely* 357). Traditional Sicilian values from his ancestral past are often at odds with present Australian values, but have a bearing on the present. In *The Lonely Hunter*, Romeo's extended family unfavorably compares him to his successful second cousin Eddie Bevelacqua. However, events take a strange and unexpected turn as corporate high-flyer Eddie suddenly decides to change his life radically, quits his job, and ends up romantically involved with high-class prostitute Margaret Appleford. Eddie's actions cause considerable consternation in the extended family, partly because of the extreme *vergogna* (shame) associated with such behavior in traditional Sicilian society, but also because social and economic success in the lucky country is a prime justification for the many trials and tribulations of the migration process, and Eddie's actions negate it all:

it's the wildest bit of news to hit them since Mt. Etna got active again and threatened to wipe out their hometown of Zaffarana. Lots of Sicilian prayers saved Zaffarana but . . . not even the intervention of a sympathetic saint will stop Eddie . . . Anyway, with Eddie so besmirched in the eyes of the relatives, maybe I'll get the number one spot on their hit parade. (354–55)

Despite the potential benefit to Romeo in this instance, he is, however, not a type to subscribe wholeheartedly to community traditions. Much to his father's disappointment, he moves out of the parental home, preferring to pay rent for a Bondi pad rather than follow the Sicilian Australian tradition of staying with his parents until he has saved enough to buy a home of his own. Furthermore, at age thirty, he is still without wife and children, and thus judged as not "settled in to a normal life like everyone else" (155).

In *Romeo of the Underworld*, Romeo absconds from the old life in the attempt to obtain a new start and spiritual emancipation by going to Brisbane. A dramatic landing (one of the plane engines threatens to catch fire—a link with Mt. Etna) reminds him of the Cloudland Ballroom, whose lights "always made me think of the silhouette of a volcano—the active Mt. Etna, of course" (12). Although the ballroom has since been demolished, it is still vivid in the memory of a visit to Brisbane (some 18 years previously in 1976) to escape "the living hell of Marrickville" (6)—a symbolically paradoxical

enterprise of approaching the portals of the afterlife in order to escape hell in this life.

As well as the central character and Mt. Etna, significant linking elements in the two novels are nightclubs, symbolically correlated to the classical myth of Etna as the portal to the underworld. Sydney's *Arrivederci Roma*, the haunt of Eddie Bevelacqua, is graphically described as a Dantesque underworld ruled by the cardinal vice of Jealousy (292–94). A similar ambience of sleazy “grub and grind” (*Romeo* 79) is presented in Brisbane's *The Underworld*, a substitute for the now vanished Cloudland Ballroom, where Romeo meets Nigel, a young Aboriginal who is a superb dancer and lives on his wits.

People, places, and events from past and present, are constantly intertwined throughout the novel. Sicilian Australian Monica Aquila, with whom Romeo had a tempestuous love affair in 1976, is constantly present in Romeo's memory, and his return to Brisbane is also a search for her. It is only towards the end of his 1994 visit that Romeo learns about her tragic death: her drunken father Michele, then proprietor of the Il Volcano restaurant in Petrie Terrace, set fire to the building while Monica was asleep inside (255–57). The present is Mary Aquila, with whom he has an affair before discovering that she is Monica's illegitimate daughter, brought up by Monica's mother Gloria.

Images and myths of Mt. Etna from the Sicilian past are a recurrent feature of the novel. In a flashback to 1976, Romeo recalls being told about the Greek legend that Mt. Etna sky rains fire when Typhon stirs underneath the mountain, which leads to the superimposition: “every now and then I get a glimpse of the Cloudland Ballroom and think of a monster named Typhon restlessly sleeping beneath it” (129). Michele Aquila states that the real Piedimontesi (Romeo and himself) have the volcano in their blood and it makes them a little crazy, always rumbling, ready to explode without warning (29). Seventeen-year-old Romeo's “rumbling” is the constant ambiguity over *sicilianità* (Sicilian traditions and identity)—a highly individualistic representation of the identity crisis common to second generation Italian Australians. On the one hand, Romeo considers himself an Aussie (127) and vehemently questions the maintenance of Sicilian traditions: “This is Australia. Our families left the old country far behind, long ago and forever. Why should kids like Monica and me perpetuate old-world myths, old-world romance? Old-world bullshit” (104). On the other hand, there is comfort to be found in genetic memory, food⁵ (Romeo is a deft hand at preparing traditional Sicilian peasant dishes, 232–33), and language: “Mrs Aquila [Monica's mother] has chosen to speak in Sicilian, the language I have faith in. It's dirty and clear, no elaboration, no airs and graces, no bullshit” (111). And the tales of Mt. Etna told by relatives and *paesani* are always present in Romeo's consciousness despite the occasional explosive negative reaction: “If I have to hear any more about Mt-fucking-Etna I'll go crazy” (129).

The Lonely Hunter, *Romeo of the Underworld*, and *The Volcano* can, in many ways, be seen as constituting a trilogy. They are linked through the central characters Romeo

Costanzo and Mary Aquila, both second-generation Sicilian Australians, and by the Australia urban environment (Sydney and Brisbane). The overarching link is, however, Mt. Etna and the associated Sicilian *contadino* traditions.

Mt. Etna does not feature explicitly in the writing of Antonio Casella who, at the age of 15, migrated to Western Australia with his family from San Fratello, a small town in the northern Mt. Etna area. He has published *Southfalia*, a fantasy novel, based on the idea of Western Australia as a colony established by the ancient Romans (the only explicit Sicilian connection is one of the minor characters, the dialect-speaking greengrocer Filippo Grassi). His second novel, *The Sensualist*, is set in Perth with a first-generation Sicilian Australian as its protagonist. His latest novel, *An Olive Branch for Sante*, is set partly in Australia, partly in Sicily, and is the story of Australian born Ira-Jane exploring her Sicilian roots, and her Sicilian born half-brother Sante discovering his relationship with Australia.

The Sensualist relates the story of Nicola (Nick) Amedeo who, since his arrival in Fremantle in 1938, has achieved substantial material success in the construction business. He has a mansion, a Mercedes, loyal employees, a devoted Australian wife, Joyce, and a Greek Australian mistress. However, events force both Joyce and Nick to confront themselves and their personal histories as well as the relationship with their two children. The past invades the present as Joyce's journey takes her back in memory to the northwest of Western Australia, a vast alien land feared by its white inhabitants, while Nick returns in spirit to the harsh environment of the mountains of Sicily conditioned by its myths and implacable rituals. His re-evocation of childhood memories in the days preceding his sudden and unexpected death is entirely internalized and seems to be a quest for self-knowledge as well as an attempt to reach an understanding of the tragedy that struck his parents, although some aspects of the event (*nonno's* exact role in the honor killing of his mother; whether or not Nick's uncle Saru is his real father) can never be resolved with absolute certainty.

For Nick, the migration experience represents an uprooting from his Sicilian *contadino* origins, but also a release from *miseria* (poverty) and a distancing from a suppressed traumatic childhood experience. He seems to have totally accepted Australia to the extent that, not long after arrival, he “spoke Australian like one of the [Wonga] locals, much to everyone's amazement” (23). His sense of identification with the new country is highly positive and enthusiastic (“This is the country, this is the life!” 79) since it has allowed him to attain not only considerable material success but also a sense of great personal achievement (“it doesn't matter who your father was, it's what you do that counts” 28). And he is proud of the contribution made by Italians to the transformation of Australia (“When we got there all you could see was asbestos and weatherboard shacks . . . In the fifties we started building in bricks and made money by the bucketful” 102).⁶

One of the central themes in the novel is Nick's continuation and adaptation in an Australian context of the traditional

Sicilian concepts of *padre* (father) and *famiglia* (family). Sicilian tradition saw the family as a tower of strength against the social and economic insecurity often endemic in the history of this region due to exploitative, inept, and corrupt governments. Nick sees the family as the most important social unit, worthy of hard work and sacrifices. He has, in a sense, attempted to recreate his original Sicilian family with himself in a role analogous to that of his patriarchal *nonno* (grandfather).⁷ Nick perceives his family as part of the empire he has created, and wants it to be seen as perfect by outsiders (55–56) although, in fact, it presents dysfunctional elements (Joyce's anxiety, John's rebelliousness and self-hatred, Nella's insistence on doing her own thing—so very against Sicilian traditional practices of former generations). Nick's dynastic ambitions for family continuity and for the business he has painstakingly created are, however, thwarted. Family breakdown and the destruction of the business by his son John after Nick's death seem to mark the end of his legacy. In this regard, the novel presents an interesting variation on Pivato's observation (175, 177) that the depiction of fragmentation in the Italian migrant family contradicts the popular myth of close family unity and support.

The traditional Sicilian father figure is central to the concept of *famiglia*, with the larger-than-life and somewhat flamboyant Nick occupying a central role within the family unit. Nick emulates his grandfather as *padre padrone* (patriarchal figure) in the preparation and distribution of the Christmas roast kid. However, he is unable to emulate some of his role model's characteristics (cannot command absolute obedience and respect from his children), and it is only after considerable searching, both in memory and in conversations with his aged uncle Basili, that Nick becomes aware of a hitherto unknown aspect of his grandfather's character—his observance of the Arab-derived Sicilian honor code resulting in the slaying of Nick's mother for her infidelity, a traumatic event that Nick had witnessed as a child.

Nick's links with Sicilian cultural practices are closely related to his perceptions of the past. His expectation that his wife be virtuous (52) is clearly linked to Sicilian traditions of *onestà* (honesty) and *onore* (honor) for the woman, while his own sexual adventures are in keeping with Sicilian concepts of masculinity. Nick believes the old folk were right about marriage and children being permanent (84), a view that is in direct contrast with that of his Anglo-Australian bank manager, Hugh O'Donnell, who has been through three marriages and has an indeterminate number of kids to support. An interesting complement to Nick as the father figure is provided through Nick's employee-cum-protégé, Steve Lambert. Son of a weak and alcohol-ridden father, Steve looks to Nick in much the same way as Nick looked to his *nonno*. He not only follows Nick's directions at work, even against his own better judgment, but also fills the void created by John's rejection. Steve is Nick's constant companion in after-work activities, to the extent that "working for Nick isn't just a job for me . . . I enjoy the fishing trips, the sessions at the club, the family do's [sic]. In a sense Nick's family is my family" (19).

Joyce's relationship with Nick is not only based on strong sexual attraction, their children, and the sharing of worldly goods, but also presents complex existentialist elements. She is from an "old" Anglo-Celtic Australian pioneer family and attempts to find a sense of identity through her union with Nick, a "new" CALD Australian. Nick's energy and highly positive attitude to life contrasts with, and complements, her greater perspicacity but less positive attitude. Although she loves him and accepts some of his traditional practices, including his infidelities, she is considering leaving him, partly because of the fear that she might have inherited her mother's paranoia (64–65), partly because of the desire to claim her own space. Ultimately, however, her life experience with Nick leads to the realization that she is, after all, a vital link in the chain of destiny that has been instrumental in helping to shape a new world (334).

Although the socio-cultural backgrounds of Nick and Joyce are vastly different, there are some similarities in the landscapes associated with their formative years. Both Sicily and rural Western Australia are harsh arid lands that inspire isolation, strong feelings, and a sense of mystery.⁸ Joyce has never visited Sicily, and her view of the island is in part embodied in Nick's vitality and sensuality. Her perceptions of its social and geographical characteristics are, however, mediated not so much by Nick as by her uncle Desmond and sister Flo. Young Joyce at Binji Cross is fascinated by Desmond's idyllic view of Sicily as a "country of eagle's nest villages hanging precariously from white clay ridges in the sun . . . the island of shepherds that knew Arcadian joys and smelled of civilizations" (4). After Flo visited Nick's hometown she told Joyce that it was "dirty and unkempt" (87), its inhabitants like the Aborigines, but found that the Sicilian countryside was quite inspiring "with more arrogance than a beauty queen and white stone ridges as lonely as the Australian outback" (88). This common geological feature provides a point of contact with Joyce's origins, for Joyce too is a migrant to urban Perth from "a land where a woman, more so than a man, might be lost and none would notice. A country that still mourned its sparse down of she-oaks and salmon gums; a landscape that listened for the music of black-boys played like zithers by the easterlies" (4).

Of Nick's children, it is only Nella who finds self-realization while John continues on the path of self-destruction compounded by the rejection of family bonds. Nella is vibrant, full of life, and displays Amedeo zest, pride, and spirit of independence (60). Although initially she seems very "Australian," she ultimately develops a positive sense of identity through the assimilation of the best of both parental legacies: Sicilian resilience and survival, instinctive love, and passion; Australian tolerance, moral strength, and rationality (322). Her reconstitution of the family under parameters that are different to those operating in traditional Sicilian *contadino* culture provides a final resolution of regeneration and hope through the superimposition of two diverse cultural contexts.

The superimposition of two diverse cultural and geographical contexts is further explored and elaborated

in Casella's third novel. While in *The Sensualist* the rural settings of Sicily and Western Australia are marked by a sense of harshness, loneliness, and alienation, their role in *An Olive Branch for Sante* assumes more positive values. The rural environment is presented largely as wholesome and spiritual, while the city is either non-existent or, when it makes an appearance in the Australian section, is vapid and alienating. *An Olive Branch for Sante* is the story of Australian-born Ira-Jane, a product of contemporary Australia who, despite her conviction that "memories are self-indulgent, a sign of weakness, a wasteful sentimentality" (1), decides to explore the Sicilian roots acquired through her adoptive nonni, and her Sicilian-born half-brother Sante, who desires to discover his connection with Australia, a country he feels part of but has never experienced. Ira-Jane's trip to Sicily to re-establish contact with the daughter of her nonni leads her to meet Sante Marzano, of Italian Australian parentage, conceived in Australia, born and raised in the hilltop town of San Sisto (province of Messina). Sante decides to "return" to find a future in the more progressive climate of Australia and ends up working in Clem Franzetti's olive plantation in Western Australia.

It is in the countryside of both Sicily and Australia where the protagonists of the novel find spiritual solace and in some cases transformation. Sante's mother, Ira La Rocca, first appears in the novel seeking solace under her own centuries-old olive tree while her husband, Don Alfio, returns to San Sisto to find restful peace. In Australia, Sante and Ira-Jane seal their spiritual union in the Kimberlies. In this "remote, galactic landscape [that] spoke of times far more ancient than the Mediterranean" (305), both young people find what they seek—an identity beyond the confines of the space and the culture they were born into: "She could see it now. Ira-Jane without Sante was a leaf searching for a tree. Sicily brought them together, it took a pool in the Kimberlies to crystallize the significance of that event" (305).

Although dealing with similar Sicilian origins (rural north eastern Sicily) and similar Australian destinations (urban setting in a state capital), the two writers present characters, situations, and outcomes that are in appearance quite different but also have some interesting parallels.

Armanno's novels convey a strong sense of overlapping past and present spatial dimensions that impact on the characters' states of being: "Every time they looked at the Brisbane sky . . . They were delighted and they were confused—and all they could hang on to were memories of the past, hope for the future, their food, and old stories of home" ("Under" 23). Armanno's focus is on his characters' existential dilemmas, with the dysfunctional family situation of the main characters constituting an important aspect. While both first- and second-generation characters in the three novels identify themselves within a context of Sicilian Australian practices and traditions, there is a progressive phasing out of the presence and influence of family as the trilogy progresses. In *The Lonely Hunter*, Romeo Costanzo is to some extent connected to, and influenced by, his Sicilian extended family, with traditional

practices being mapped onto an Australian context. In *Romeo of the Underworld*, Romeo has become detached from his traditional family and observes the dissolution of the Aquila family. He is also extraneous to the potential formation of a new unconventional family—the rehabilitated Michele Aquila, his granddaughter Mary, Mary's Australian father, and Nigel, the Aboriginal disco dancer, may end up living together—since in the conclusion to the novel he decides to return to Sydney to continue his quest for spiritual emancipation. In *Volcano*, young Emilio leaves his parents after deciding that he will not follow family tradition and take on his father's occupation. Later, after Desideria's desertion, he is destined to remain alone for the rest of his life.

In *The Sensualist*, family presents both cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity and is centrally linked to the existentialist dilemmas of the characters. Casella's novel is about the passing of the traditional *padre padrone* figure, the transition from traditional old-country family values to something that is a blend of both the old and the new, with the daughter taking charge as both cultural custodian and cultural innovator and producing children who resemble their grandfather. The family remains the focal unit, a source of unity and strength for all its members, but is redefined with new roles and new relationships for the people who comprise it. This redefinition of the family is further elaborated in *An Olive Branch for Sante*.

In the final analysis, both novels can be seen as presenting linking elements between Sicily and Australia, thus constituting a specific case of the general concept articulated by Italian Canadian writer Frank Paci: "In this world we live on a bumpy road of surface reality and abstract reality . . . Reality in the novel . . . includes all differences—all parts—because it sees that only the whole is truth" (39–40). The "realities" depicted in these novels can be seen as characterized by counter-discursive elements that function to interrogate the temporal and spatial dislocations resulting from the mapping of two overlapping cultural contexts. As Stuart Hall points out, in diasporic contexts cultural identity is, in one sense, a matter of becoming as well as of being (223). The first-generation Sicilian characters identify with counter-hegemonic views of both Italian and Australian cultural contexts, while second-generation Romeo Costanzo, Mary Aquila, and Nella Amedeo propose a multiple conceptualization of Australia that defines it also as a Sicilian space. The novels by Armanno and Casella can thus be considered as providing a specific example of the general observation made by Homi Bhabha regarding the potential of Australia's pluricultural society to "alternative" present views from the periphery ("Narrating the Nation"). In this regard, they can be seen, together with the literature produced by other CALD writers, as one way of constructing the different points of identification that constitute cultural identity. □

NOTES

¹ An initial version of this paper was presented at the Conference on "Italia globale: le altre Italie e l'Italia altrove," organized by the Australasian Centre for Italian Studies, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Western Australia at Treviso (Italy), 30 June–2 July 2005. Financial support for attending this conference was provided by the Faculty of Arts Research Committee, University of Wollongong.

² As well as in these writers, examples of Southern Italian themes and characters can be found in the oral narrative of Salvatore Tripodi (Rando, *Emigrazione* 238–39); the choice of a Calabrian protagonist, Giovanni Carrano, for Bosi's seminal Italian Australian novel *Australia cane* (whose author is from northern Italy); the memoirs of Sebastiano Petruzzello (Gatt-Rutter); Gabriella Sterio's novel *Libellula*, and the cinematic production of Cristina Maddafferi (Rando, *Emigrazione* 194–95). In very rare instances, southern Italian characters are also found in literary works produced by Anglo-Australian writers such as Katharine Susannah Prichard (Pirastu), although, paradoxically, not in John O'Grady's assimilationist blockbuster *They're a Weird Mob*, whose protagonist, Nino Culotta, comes from northern Italy.

³ The title of the novel *The Lonely Hunter* derives from the expression "the cock is a lonely hunter" (Armanno, *Lonely* 262), which is used in some parts of Sicily.

⁴ Some of these are continued in Australia. Rando La Cava (56–60), for example, relates how women from the Aeolian islands in Sydney and Melbourne telephone each other for enchantments to get rid of various ailments.

⁵ Carniel argues that the preparation and consumption of food are both thematically and structurally integral to the depiction of Italian Australian identities in narrative texts. While not entirely constitutive of ethnicity, food is a useful and appropriate metaphor, particularly within literature, for understanding the way in which ethnic identities are articulated.

⁶ Accounts of the considerable contribution made by Italians to the Australian construction industry can be found, *inter alia*, in Castles *et al* (56–61, 82–83, 220–21) and Andrea del Bosco's brilliant 50-minute documentary *They came, they saw, they concreted* (2002).

⁷ Among the paradoxes inherent in traditional Sicilian culture is the view of society as a patriarchal system while many of its patron saints are female (St. Agata for Catania; Santa Lucia for Siracusa; Santa Rosalia, who saved the city of Palermo from plague)

⁸ The arid harshness and sense of mystery presented by the Australian outback is a theme found in few Italian Australian writers. Particularly interesting examples are Andreoni (*Martin, Lingua, Zuccherò*), Leoni and Gabbrielli ("Incident," *Polenta*).

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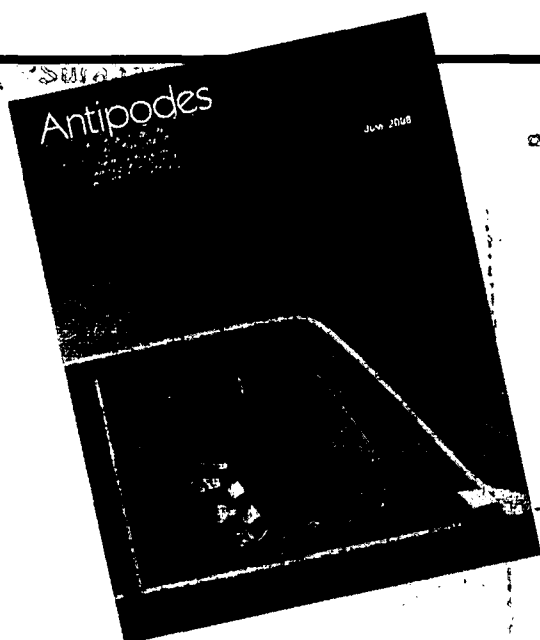
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